

as a united Nation can work together, face any peril, and succeed.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL
CHARLES W. THOMAS

HON. JIM McCRERY

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. McCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a fellow Louisianan, Major General Charles W. Thomas, who is retiring after more than 32 years of service to the Nation in the United States Army.

General Thomas served the past two years as the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Training Doctrine Command (TRADOC), responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of this major Army element and its 15 installations, 27 Army schools, and 67 thousand military and civilian personnel located throughout the United States. TRADOC's mission is to prepare the U.S. Army for war and is the architect of the future Army. In the fast paced world of change we have witnessed at a national and international level over the past three decades, General Thomas has been instrumental in steering the U.S. Army on a path to meet current and future threats to our national security. Equally important, he has contributed significantly to the readiness of the Army by ensuring the men and women in uniform were well trained and well equipped for their missions during peace and war. His leadership and mentoring played a major role in the development of an Army in which the citizens of our great nation can be justifiably proud.

Serving under such daunting responsibilities has been a pattern in General Thomas' military career, a career which began in October 1968 and saw him serve in the Military Intelligence Corps at such diverse locations as Turkey, Thailand, Germany, and in Saudi Arabia during Operation DESERT STORM. These tours of duty and a variety of other command and staff assignments have taken this alumnus of Northwestern State University in Louisiana with undergraduate and graduate degrees in Zoology across the seas and around the United States with duty in Georgia, Arizona, Hawaii, and Virginia, among other states. But his home has always been Natchitoches, Louisiana, where his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Charles and Sadie Thomas, still reside today.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize this respected Army leader. I wish General Thomas and his wife Sharon all the best, and am certain that Members of the House will join me in tribute to this outstanding American.

A VISION OF HINDU INDIA

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, I noticed two recent articles that underline the religious tyranny in India. One was in the New York Times and the other was in the Washington Times. Together, they show that for minorities, the

promise of Indian secularism and religious freedom is a mirage.

The RSS, a militant Hindu nationalist organization, wants to ban foreign churches from India. It wants to reconvert everybody who converted from Hinduism to any other religion, such as Christianity or Islam. The RSS published a booklet encouraging people to file false criminal cases against Christians and members of other minority religions. They are moving ahead with plans to build a Hindu temple on the site of a very revered mosque. Is this how they practice secularism and religious tolerance in India?

The ruling BJP is under the umbrella of the RSS. In fact, Prime Minister Vajpayee just about a month ago told an audience that he will "always" be a part of the RSS. Shiv Sena, a militant coalition partner of the BJP, is also part of the RSS.

Since Christmas 1998, Christians have been subjected to church burnings, attacks on Christian schools and prayer halls, nuns being raped, priests being murdered, the burning murder of a missionary and his two little sons, and so many other atrocities that I have lost track of them. Two independent investigations show that 35 Sikhs were massacred in Chithi Singhpora while the President was visiting in March. Now these disturbing articles have come to light. How far will this pattern of religious hostility go on before we do something to stop it?

We should declare India a violator of religious rights. In light of that, we should cut U.S. aid to India. Why should the American taxpayer be forced to pay taxes to support a government that engages in such policies? We should also put ourselves on record in support of self-determination for Khalistan, Kashmir, Nagalim, and the other minority nations living under Indian rule. It is our responsibility to do what we can to support freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the following New York Times article into the RECORD for the information of my colleagues and the American people.

A CAMP MEETING CELEBRATES THE VISION OF
A HINDU INDIA

By Celia W. Dugger

AGRA, India, Oct. 15—Dust rose in derbies across the dun-colored parade ground here, swirling around the legs of almost 60,000 uniformed men and boys from more than 7,000 villages. Those foot soldiers in the quest for a Hindu nation stood in ruler-straight lines that stretched as far as the eye could see.

They had come to a three-day camp to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Rashtriya Swayamservak Sangh, or the National Volunteers Association. It is a powerful disciplined and, some believe, dangerously divisive organization that has given rise to a raft of affiliated groups, including the Bharatiya Janata party that now leads India's coalition government.

After an hour of toe touches, deep knee bends and push-ups, the volunteers sat cross-legged in the dirt and lay down their long bamboo staffs to listen raptly to their leader, K.S. Sudarshan. He inspired them with a vision of India as an ancient and tolerant Hindu nation, but warned that the country was threatened from within by Christian churches that he described as foreign dominated and funded.

Although Christians have lived in India for 2,000 years and make up only 2 percent of its one billion people, he raised the specter of Christian conversions diminishing the domi-

nance of Hindus and leading to secessionist movements. He criticized Christian and Muslim Indians who have refused, in his eyes, to embrace their Hindu heritage. He called on Christians to sever links with "foreign" churches and set up a Church of India. And he condemned Roman Catholic missionaries who believe that only their path leads to salvation.

"How can we allow such people to work here?" he asked from his podium high above the ground. A larger-than-life likeness of the Hindu god Krishna loomed behind him.

Fifty-three years after India gained its independence from British rule, Mr. Sudarshan's movement is still agitating for a redefinition of the nation's founding secular values. They were enunciated in the 1950 Constitution, which guarantees "the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." And they were ardently defended by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that religious minorities could retain their identities and still be loyal Indians.

In contrast, the Hindu nationalist ideology defines India as a Hindu nation whose people share a common geography, culture and ancestry. In this view, Muslims and Christians were converted from Hinduism and need to be reintegrated into the Hindu mainstream—a theme first sounded in the 1920's and articulated by Mr. Sudarshan today.

After the closing ceremony, thousands of volunteers, all dressed in paramilitary-style khaki shorts, white shirts and black caps, rushed from their rigid grid on the field toward the dignitaries sitting on red velvet couches in the blazing sun. A group of them surrounded Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, who started in the R.S.S., moved to the Bharatiya Janata party, and is now believed to be in line to inherit the mantle of leadership from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who joined the R.S.S. back in the 1940's.

As orders blared from a tower of loudspeakers, Mr. Advani joined the rows of men in making the movement's salute (hand held stiffly across the chest, palm down) on the count of one, lowering his head on two and dropping his arm on three.

His presence here was another tantalizing clue in one of the country's favorite parlor games: Are the R.S.S. and the B.J.P.—the political party that is part of the Sangh Parivar, or R.S.S. family—hand in glove or at each other's throats?

The answer seems to be a little of both. There is a natural tension between them, Mr. Sudarshan's movement, which is striving to build a Hindu nation from the grass roots up, is purist in its ideology. The ruling party, which is striving for political power, has set aside many of its Hindu nationalist planks to win the support of regional parties with secular outlooks. It is no longer pushing for the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of a demolished 16th-century mosque in Ayodhya, for example.

But the movement and the governing party also need each other. The party relies on the movement's vast network of committed volunteers at election time. And the movement enjoys a measure of political influence because of its close ties to the party.

"The relationship is a bit like that between the Christian Coalition and the Republican Party," said Ashutosh Varshney, a political scientist at Notre Dame and an expert on India.

More than half a million boys and men attend the daily meetings of the R.S.S. in 45,000 local branches all over India. The group's appeal is part Boy Scouts, part crusaders. Many become volunteers for the daily physical exercise, sports and camaraderie, but were later fired by the association's idea of nationhood.

The camp here in Agra was an organization feat, subdivided into many smaller neighborhoods where sanitation, roads, electricity and cooking facilities had all been installed by the association.

At 4:30 this morning, a bugle woke the swayamsevak, or volunteers, while a full moon still dangled over the grounds. By 6 a.m., as dawn broke and a pinkish-orange orb of sun rose, they had lined up for exercise drills. Afterward, they sang a song calling on the volunteers to awaken to threats from India's enemies and traitors. The high-pitched voices of young boys cut through the low hum of the men's singing.

Many of those here were new recruits. Rajkumar Gupta, 13, could explain little of the group's ideology. He studies in a school run by an affiliate of the association. He and the 160 students in the school had come with their teachers "because the school told us to."

Abhinay Kumar Sharma, 15, was attending his second camp and he had learned some of the association's thinking. "The Sangh is here to fight social evils, for example, conversions to Christianity," he said. "This is a Hindu nation and conversions are divisive and this will lead to the division of the country."

Lal Singh, a 65-year-old farmer, echoed the same theme, saying: "Conversion is wrong. This is against our culture. And in these other religions, this sense of humanity and service to man is not there, while it is in our religion."

Yashpal Singh Nayak, 26, a traveling perfume salesman, worried that extended families are breaking down into nuclear families and that women are leaving their faces unveiled in front of elders and males. "If it continues like this," he said, "it will be a serious threat to Indian culture."

CONCERNING VIOLENCE IN MIDDLE EAST

SPEECH OF

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2000

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, today, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly for H. Con. Res. 426, a resolution concerning the Violence in the Middle East. I voted in favor of its passage, however, I wish to register my continued concerns about the state of affairs in the Middle East.

We must be clear: there is bloodshed in both Palestinian and Israeli neighborhoods; mothers of both Palestinians and Israelis mourn over their dead and dying; there is distrust and cultural pride in both Palestinian and Israeli hearts. This situation is not exclusive to one side: it is a mutual tragedy.

I am proud that the United States has played the role of an honest broker during these recent weeks. Moreover, I support the efforts made by our Nation and our President to broker peace between these warring parties in the Middle East. I believe that the United States needs to continue dedicating our resources towards the effort of lasting and sincere peace. I voted in favor of passage of the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, which provides funding and resources for both Palestinians and Israelis.

However, I am profoundly disappointed in what seems to be the inability of PLO Chair-

man Yassar Arafat to effectively communicate order and calm within his ranks. I see, more often than not, Palestinian rebels throwing rocks and stones in mob rule fashion. It is incumbent upon Chairman Arafat to restore order and, until that occurs, the United States will find it difficult to maintain its honest broker status.

I want to reiterate my unflagging commitment to the peace process in the Middle East. Now is not the time for the United States to pick a side. Rather, it is time for us to be prepared to play an integral and historic role in helping restore peace in that region. Without the help of both Palestinians and Israelis, this accomplishment will be impossible.

THE GAMING INDUSTRY

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, a few months ago I felt it necessary to speak out against alleged abuses in the gaming industry. I did so not to express disapproval of the gaming industry as a whole but to express my frustration with those in the gaming industry who may unfairly take advantage of their patrons. My earlier statement was related to the previous actions of SunCruz Casino at the time and based on the findings of Florida Attorney General Robert Butterworth and several news reports.

I was concerned that some individuals who participate in gambling for entertainment and recreation can unwittingly fall prey to unethical practices by a few rouge casino owners. I said then and will repeat now that I am not anti-gaming, and I would not call myself pro-gaming either. I do, however, strongly believe in the concept that those who choose to gamble should be able to do so in the establishments of respected gaming interest who treat their customers and their communities fairly.

Given the Attorney General's findings and the record of SunCruz under the previous owner, I did not believe that the casino was operating a fair and responsible establishment.

Since my previous statement, I have come to learn that SunCruz Casino now finds itself under new ownership and, more importantly, that its new owner has a renowned reputation for honesty and integrity. The new owner, Mr. Adam Kidan, is most well known for his successful enterprise, Dial-a-Mattress, but he is also well known as a solid individual and a respected member of his community.

While Mr. Kidan certainly has his hands full in his efforts to clean up SunCruz's reputation, his track record as a businessman and as a citizen lead me to believe that he will easily transform SunCruz from a questionable enterprise to an upstanding establishment that the gaming community can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of my statement is not to criticize or promote the gaming industry or to favor one casino owner over another, but rather stand by the consumers who patronize casinos as a form of entertainment. I believe that every individual who visits a gaming vessel in Florida, should know that they are gaming in an establishment that represents the community well, and gives every individual a fair shot. I hope that all casinos owners and operators share in this philosophy.

I look forward to the positive changes Mr. Kidan is more than capable of bringing to the gaming industry and I hope that others will follow his lead when he brings positive changes to SunCruz.

AFRICA DEMOCRACY FORUM

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, at the founding conference of the Africa Democracy Forum in Abuja, Nigeria, earlier this month, Carl Gershman, President of the US National Endowment for Democracy, delivered a thoughtful speech about the challenges and opportunities facing this important region. The conference brought together democratic activists to further cooperation in the promotion of human rights, good governance, and peace in the continent.

I submit Mr. Gershman's speech for the RECORD, and I urge my colleagues to give serious attention to his remarks.

AFRICA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

REMARKS DELIVERED BY CARL GERSHMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, AT THE FOUNDING CONFERENCE OF THE AFRICA DEMOCRACY FORUM IN ABUJA, NIGERIA, OCTOBER 3-4, 2000

It's a great honor for me to join you in inaugurating the Africa Democracy Forum (ADF), an Africa-wide network of democratic activists that will both strengthen cooperation among democrats on the African continent and link their efforts to the World Movement for Democracy (WMD), the worldwide democracy network that was established in New Delhi, India, early last year. While this is my first visit to Nigeria, I feel like I've been here many times before since so many people in this room are friends with whom the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has worked for more than a decade. I'm speaking of Ayo Obe, the President of the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), our co-host, who chaired the final session of the inaugural assembly of the WMD, and without whom it would not have been possible to adopt by acclamation the Founding Declaration from which she just read. I'm speaking also of Olsia Agbakoba, the founder of our other co-host, the Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS), who has been in the forefront of the struggle for human rights and the rule of law in Nigeria; of Clement Nwankwo, who was with us in Washington in May 1999 to receive the NED's Democracy Award on behalf of all the organizations comprising the Transition Monitoring Group; of Abdul Ohroh, Innocent Chukwuma, and of course Beko Ransome Kuti who has never hesitated to stand against injustice whatever the personal risk.

The NED has been honored to support the democracy movement in Nigeria during the most difficult period of military dictatorship. Dave Peterson, our senior program officer for Africa who spear-headed that support, could not be with us at this conference, but his partner Learned Dees is here, and I don't think I have to explain to anyone the importance of Learned's contribution to democracy in Nigeria and in Africa generally. I also want to recognize Ann Macro of the Human Rights Unit of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which has made a grant supporting African participation in